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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Achievement of Revitalization of Victim Communities of the past is an Essential Component Strengthening Human Rights.

The case of the Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul

The strengthening of the Rule of Law and respect of Human Rights is directly linked with essential remedy measures towards the victim communities whose rights have been violated. This is highly important in the case of the communities driven towards an almost annihilation. Urgent measures are needed for such communities to survive and continue with their historical existence and their role to the country they belong. The Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul constituting with its 125.000 members the 15% of the city's population at the foundation of Republic of Turkey in 1923, presently are living as an expatriate community up to 98% of its population out of their native city of Istanbul. This occurred, as we have reported several times in this forum, because of the state driven discriminatory measures and the violation of human rights throughout Twenty Century. The Present Government of Turkey being in power from the year 2003 on several occasions recognized the unjust acts of the past against the Greek-Orthodox Community. Recently (22 April 2018) the President Republic of Turkey Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a nationwide TV interview recognized this fact saying that: "there were thousands I say hundred thousand Greek-Orthodox (Rum) in our country. They were forced to emigrate because of mistakes and this was a pity". During the last 8 years the EFC pursued a policy of direct communication with the Government of Turkey functionaries to alleviate the consequences of above mentioned violations by formulating and implementing remedy measures. The principal aim of the proposed measures is to prevent the disappearance of the Community residing in their native city Istanbul. Despite some noticeable improvements in some issues such as: restitution of citizenships, change of attitude towards Community Welfare Foundations and especially towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate, there are still many pending issues to mention such the prohibition of elections in Welfare Foundations and the return of their real estate properties which have been confiscated in the past. However the most important measure is the necessity the State of Turkey to support the repatriation of young generation members of the Community by implementing measures that have been proposed in the past by the EFC.